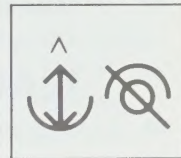


COMMUNICATING TOGETHER



A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE ABOUT AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION

VOLUME 6, NUMBER 4

DECEMBER 1988



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A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE ABOUT AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION

VOL. 6, NO. 4 DECEMBER 1988

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ISAAC ANIMATES THE MIND

ANN KENNEDY

Ann Kennedy is managing director of the Easter Seal Communication Institute and editor of Communicating Together. She attended the fifth Biennial ISAAC convention in Anaheim, California in October, 1988 and reports here on the highlights of this very successful meeting.

As the slogan promised, this fifth biennial meeting of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication truly did animate the mind. In the delightful environment of Disneyland and with Mickey Mouse in attendance, how could one help but be captivated by the exciting program planned for us. This was the fourth international augmentative convention I have had the opportunity to attend and without doubt the biggest and best yet, with just over 600 delegates. I couldn't help but compare it to the first one in Toronto in 1980 and reflect on how the whole field of augmentative and alternative communication has truly come of age in those eight years.

The program itself was a masterpiece of scheduling with sessions addressing topics from advocacy and assessment to theoretical models and vocabulary. There was a great effort made at this convention to encourage more participation from consumers, and I believe there were more than fifty present, coming from many different parts of North America and Europe.

Planning a trip to a destination as far away as California is a challenge for the most seasoned traveller. For those in wheelchairs, the undertaking is even more formidable. Not only is the cost greater, as in nearly all cases an attendant was needed, but special arrangements had to be made with airlines to accommodate electric wheelchairs and with transportation authorities to find ground transportation to and from airports. I was part of a large group of ten, three of whom brought electric wheelchairs, and I can attest to the fact that the trip required all the planning and organization of a precise military operation.

The financial aspect had been dealt with in the months and weeks preceding our departure, and the whole ESCI staff threw itself into bake sales, cheese sales, raffle draws for ski days and general appeals for donations from interested friends. We were helped, too, by receiving an ISAAC consumer scholarship shared by all our consumer delegates.

All the advance planning proved absolutely essential as the long and fairly gruelling flight (five hours, overnight, non-stop) was tiring for everyone. Disneyland itself proved to be every bit as accessible as convention chairman Frank DeRuyter promised. Once they caught up on sleep and adjusted to the time change, our consumers ventured out independently with a minimum of assistance.

We were all impressed with the transit system in Orange County that could accommodate two wheelchairs on all the regular city buses. One day John Dowling of our office and his attendant Gary, found their way to Newport Beach by public transit. Likewise, Kari Harrington and her mother Ruth, struck off on their own to a local shopping centre. Both came back marvelling at the ease with which they made the trip, and determined to make sure authorities back home were made aware of this wonderful service.

Expect the Unexpected

Everything was going smoothly until... Sue Odell's electric wheelchair died. Despite the attempts of two servicemen and consultation with two dedicated engineer-delegates who spent hours trying to solve the problem, nothing worked and we had to admit defeat. This predicament led to Sue meeting another delegate and her parents who had fortuitously brought along a spare manual chair. Janie LaBran from Monterey, California kindly lent her spare to Sue and saved the day. We did, however, have the gruelling task of getting Sue back to Toronto in a nonfunctioning electric wheelchair. Anyone who has ever

pushed one of those for any distance will know what a backbreaker that is!

The Program

I have mentioned already the wide range of topics covered in the many seminars, courses, poster sessions, round table discussions, platform presentations and videotape presentations. For readers wanting more details I recommend the September issue of *Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)* which published abstracts of the papers.

There were some general events, however, not mentioned in AAC that were of particular interest to me.

The first was the plenary session on Sunday, October 23, entitled "Animations of the Mime — the Art or Science of Nonverbal Communication." This was a unique presentation by Rick Wamer, a talented mime artist and David Yoder, chair, Medical Allied Health Professions, University of North Carolina. These two professionals, from totally different backgrounds, combined to give a sensitive and thought provoking presentation. Dr. Yoder presented five poems or readings each of which was followed by a mime interpretation by Mr. Wamer. Mime has been called the art of silent gesture. It was truly exciting to watch this warm, moving performance that expressed humour and sadness, frustration and joy. Mr. Wamer was



Mime artist Rick Wamer.

sensitive and creative as he portrayed the feeling of being trapped behind a glass wall, and the humour he showed as he acted out "The Riddle of Therapy" was evident to all in the audience. This was one of the most unique keynote addresses I have ever observed, and certainly one that will be long remembered.

A second memorable event was the attendance of Mickey Mouse at the Awards Luncheon. As the special guest, he escorted the speakers to the podium, and presented and congratulated award winners! Among the awards presented at this lunch was the President's award to Lyle Lloyd for his years of dedication and contribution to the development of ISAAC through its formative years.

Consumers Have Their Day

Tuesday afternoon was the highlight of the conference for many people, when the Consumer Forum was presented. In a later issue of *Communicating Together* we hope to have a complete report on this forum. Here I can only mention some of the highlights. There were between twenty-five and thirty consumers present for all or part of the afternoon. Many were using synthetic speech devices. All had ideas to contribute to the presentations of guest speakers.

The afternoon was chaired by Caroline Musselwhite, ISAAC advocacy vice-president. We from ESCI were proud of the first session



Caroline Musselwhite and panel members Rick Creech, Mark Koski and Lake Kissick.

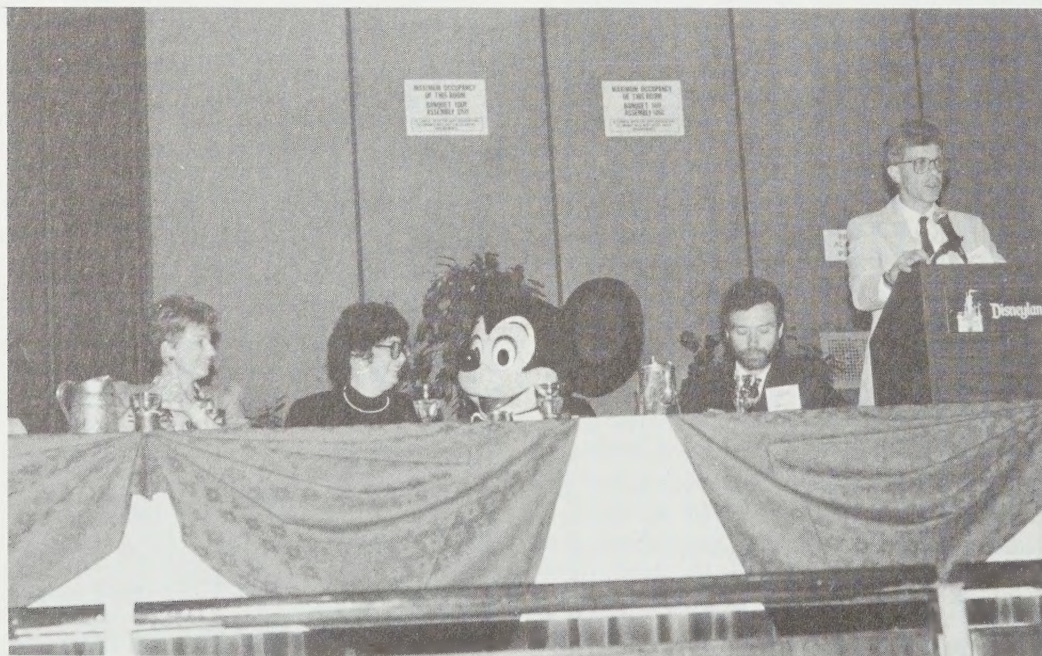
of the afternoon by Sue Odell, a Blissymbol user and one of our young adult community presentors, and Nancy McCartney-Hamilton, consultant at ESCI. They presented on "Blissymbol Strategies as They Relate to Voice Output Communication Aids." The second presentation was entitled "ParaVocal Communicators Speak Out: Strategies for Encouraging Communication Aid Use." The speakers on this panel included Rick Creech, from Richmond, Virginia, Lake Kissick of Minneapolis, Minnesota and Mark Koski of Royal Oak, Michigan — all using VOCA's — and Anne Robinson, the parent of an augmentative communicator. They addressed

such questions as how to help children access augmentative communication equipment, and what listeners can do to support communication. To the latter question, Lake Kissick answered that he just tells new people to relax, "I won't bite."

The next presentation of the afternoon featured Benny Belair of Toronto and his consultant Lynnette Norris of the Hugh MacMillan Medical Centre. Between them they presented a retrospective description from Benny's point of view of the augmentative communication systems he has had over the years. They described how he gradually came to take more responsibility for decisions regarding his devices and software, and is now an important member of the assessment team.

The afternoon ended with Caroline Musselwhite chairing an open forum on advocacy in augmentative communication and the resources available. She distributed a list which she called "A Starter Set of Resources." A lively discussion followed with topics such as: "How do device users support their listeners?", one suggestion — smile and be mildly aggressive, another — be yourself!

Consumers were also asked "What will make devices better to meet the needs of more people in more situations?" Mark Koski suggested far more storage, while Benny Belair would like to be able to use brain waves to communicate. Consumers were interested in hearing about various independent living



Mickey Mouse and head table guests Judy Montgomery, Penny Parnes, Gunnar Fargerberg listen to Frank DeRuyter at the Awards luncheon.

arrangements that were possible in different areas of the continent. One even asked how to go about finding an attendant who wasn't nutty. An answer came from another consumer who suggested they don't exist and never will!

It was apparent to all present in the room that there were many issues still to be covered in future forums, particularly with regard to independent living options, job opportunities and dealing with attendants and agencies.

Looking Ahead to 1990

As the fifth biennial international convention came to a close, people began immediately to plan for the next one in Stockholm, Sweden in August, 1990. As friends from different countries parted, it was common to hear the refrain "See you in Sweden in '90." Hopefully many of the consumers will be able to join in that adventure too. After all, we've had the practice run of getting across the continent, now we'll try the Atlantic! The bake sales and raffles will be starting again before we know it. □

Reference

- *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* (AAC) Volume 4, Number 3, September 1988.

Join ISAAC Now

The International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) offers four types of membership:

- Student Membership
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Members of ISAAC are entitled to reduced rates for: *Communicating Together*, *Communication Outlook*, *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* (AAC journal)

For membership application and other information about ISAAC write ISAAC, P.O. Box 1762, Station R, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4G 4A3.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

A Letter from Annie

KARI HARRINGTON



Kari Harrington was in the original Blissymbol class of 1971 at the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre. Since then, she has completed elementary school at James Robinson Public School in Markham, Ontario, and more recently high school at Langstaff Secondary School in Richmond Hill.

I wonder if any of you have seen the movie, "A Test of Love" or read the book, *Annie's Coming Out* on which the movie is based. It is the true story of Anne McDonald who was born in Victoria, Australia in January 1961 and who has atetoid cerebral palsy.

My favourite books and films are about people who have a disability of some sort. I like to know about their lives, how they cope with their particular disadvantages and how they overcome the obstacles they meet. Annie's story was particularly interesting to me, because, although we are similar in age, our backgrounds are so very different. From the age of three, Annie lived in an institution that really did nothing to meet the special needs of physically disabled children. Annie was thirteen years old before Rose-

mary Crossley, a new staff member, recognized Annie's intelligence and found a way for her to communicate.

Last December, I wrote to Annie in care of the Australian Spastic Society. I had almost forgotten about it, so you can imagine how excited I was when I opened a letter and found it was from her. By the way, Annie reads *Communicating Together* too. I hope she doesn't miss this issue!

In her letter, Annie included a chapter from her latest book, called *Re-Inventing the Wheelchair*. This chapter focuses on high technology and sophisticated electronic aids. Annie, in her very witty and honest way, tells why she is not really a fan of these devices. As she said, "the gadgets enable me to do things I can't do without them, but they don't let me do them fast enough to make it worthwhile." Severely disabled as she is, technology lets Annie communicate independently, but it is slower and less efficient than she can be when she dictates to someone else from her alphabet board. Annie infers that spending time with non-disabled people, even if it's just dictating what you want to say, can be so much more fun than sitting by yourself at a computer. Who can argue with that? Even people without any problems at all would love to have a secretary! Annie doesn't think that struggling so hard just to prove you can be independent, even in this one area, is worth giving up the opportunities for human contact and interaction that the dictating allows. Here is an excerpt from Anne McDonald's new book *Re-Inventing the Wheelchair*.

I found this chapter fascinating and I want to read more. I hope she'll send word when and where the whole book will be available.

* * *

From Annie's Book Re-Inventing the Wheelchair

In 1965 I heard the doctor tell my mother "There's nothing we can do. She'll never walk or talk."

Twenty years later I still can't

This section of
Communicating Together
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walk and talk. I spent twelve of those years lying on the floor. I needed a special chair, and even though these were readily available, I was living in an institution that did not buy chairs for its residents. When I was old enough to get a disability pension I bought a simple child's folding pusher. This enabled me to sit upright. I could read books and watch TV, and people could take me outside the hospital. I've had more benefit from that pusher than I have from any of the sophisticated electronic aids I've bought since.

For severely disabled people who cannot ever achieve physical independence, the independence technology gives is spurious. It may allow me to move about, but I can't pick up a toothbrush or get myself a drink of water. I communicate by spelling on an alphabet board, on which I can reach a top speed of 200 words an hour (you can probably talk at 200 words a minute, if

you want to — Chris does). I own a Canon Communicator, a mini-typewriter which I use with a headpointer and which prints my message on a long, thin strip of paper; a speech synthesizer which strings together the phonemes I select with my headpointer to make words and sentences; a computer which has been adapted so I can






Anne McDonald

use it as a word processor by pressing nine buttons instead of the keyboard. Every letter and function has a code — "a" is eleven, "b" is twelve, etc. — and it is the slowest to use of all my high-tech communication equipment, all of which is even slower than using my alphabet board. I can type at ten words an hour, provided someone else sets up the computer (I can't put a disk in the slot, let alone load a printer). The gadgets enable me to do things I can't do without them, but they don't let me do them fast enough to make it worthwhile. If technology made me normal, it would be great; as it is it makes me slower and less efficient and reduces the time I would otherwise spend with non-disabled people.


If I were to be independent I would have to have a motorized wheelchair, a hoist to life me into it, a robot to dress, wash and feed me, a computer and a phone modem to do my shopping, auto-

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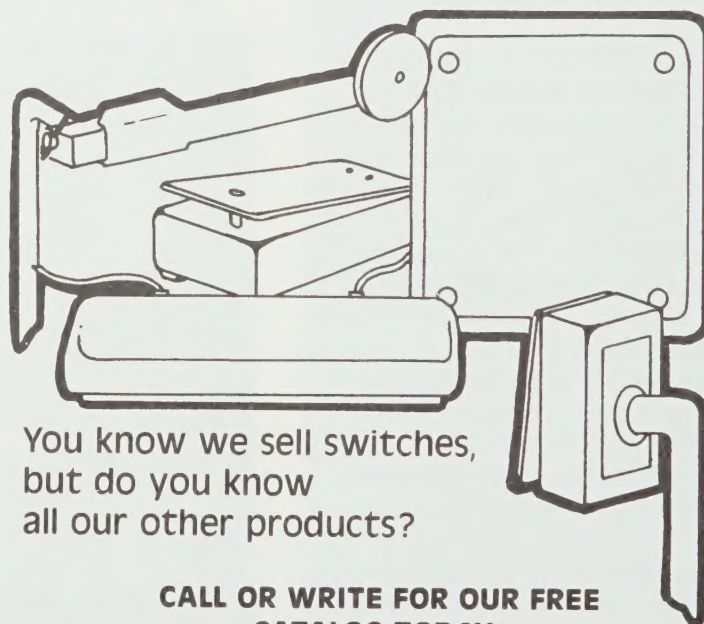
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matic doors and windows, and another robot to do the cooking, cleaning, and laundry, and at the end of the day I would be house-bound with no-one to talk to. Manufacturing all that equipment might have created some jobs, but not as many as looking after me. I am fortunate enough to have attendants paid for by the government; I couldn't afford to pay for them myself, and I certainly couldn't afford the enormous sum it would cost to set me up in high-tech independence.

Some aspects of the technological revolution have improved my life. T.V., video and books on cassette all compensate to some extent for my inability to turn pages, and not only allow me to learn, but allow me to enjoy the hours I spend waiting for other people to help me do things like eating or dressing.

I am not a fan of high technology. Laziness afflicts people with disabilities as much as people without. The more severely disabled one is, the greater the effort involved in learning to use technology and the smaller the gains. I'm reluctant to make the effort

until I'm certain the results will make the effort worthwhile. If using the computer means I write less and have less personal contact then it's not worthwhile. I don't like using a machine if there's a person available to help me. I can live a good life without any technology other than a wheelchair.

So why are other handicapped people so keen on it? Perhaps because it gives them pleasure to be able to do anything for themselves. Of course, most people aren't as severely disabled as I am, and many of my friends are able to make use of the technology now available (or would be if they could afford it). I think, though, that most use the technology either because they've been brainwashed into thinking that typing ten words an hour is what life with a disability is all about or because they can't find anyone at all to take dictation and have no alternative. Yes, I want to be able to type independently, but if I can't get up to 200 words per hour it's not worthwhile setting up the technology. I have so little output for my efforts at the best of times that the thought of diminishing

it further simply to be independent has no attractions for me.

Having a disability is an individual experience. Not only is every person with the same disability affected slightly differently, depending on their personalities they have different responses to their disability. Some see a disability as a challenge to be overcome. I see it as a nuisance to be endured. I see no reason to smile and pretend it's fine just to spare those who don't have a disability from the knowledge of what it's like. Equally, I could protect others from having to come to grips with my disability by becoming independent or by restricting my life to those activities I can do without help, but I'm not going to.

* * *

Annie certainly has strong and personal reasons for not wanting to use some of the technology herself. What do you think? Why don't you write and tell me how you feel about using computers and sophisticated aids?

Editor's Note:

Write to: Kari Harrington,
16 Jonquil Crescent, Markham,
Ontario, Canada L3P 1T4.

News from Montreal

NAIRNE, NAAMA, MARTINE, GEORGE,
JOHANNA, MAX, VANESSA AND DENNIS

This article is in response to Kari Harrington's article in the Paraphrase section of Communicating Together, Volume 5, Number 4, December 1987. It is written by eight nonspeaking students who took part in a weekly group program, which was run over the past school year by Hilary Head, an augmentative communication instructor, and Ann Sutton, speech-language pathologist at MacKay Centre in Montreal.

Kari's article was used as the basis for a group activity. First, the types of information Kari gave about herself in each paragraph were identified. Then questions were formulated to elicit that information from the group members. Then each student answered the same questions about her/himself. Finally, all the responses were put together into this article.

We are students at the MacKay Centre who meet once a week for a communication group. Our names are Nairne (age nineteen), Naama

(eighteen), Martine (twenty-one), George (twenty), Johanna (seventeen), Max (fifteen), Vanessa (eleven) and Dennis (fifteen). We all have trouble speaking and doing other things too, like using our arms and legs.

We communicate in many ways: fingerspelling, writing, Blissymbols, signs, spelling, talking, acting things out. Some of us point with our hands, some of us use our eyes, and some of us use a light pointer. This year we have enjoyed trying some talking devices. We all use the computer; George and Nairne

use it as a telephone and the rest of us would like to try!

Nairne, Martine, and Dennis live in MacKay residence during the week and go home to the country on weekends. George, Johanna, Max, Naama, and Vanessa live in different parts of Montreal.

We like to do lots of things in our spare time: talk, play games, use the computer, watch television, go swimming, see friends, drive an electric wheelchair, listen to a Walkman and watch sports. In the summer we also like to go to camp! □



Dennis, Johanna, Vanessa, Nairne, Naama (left to right)

My New Voice

DENISE GHIZZONE

Denise Ghizzone is a twenty-one-year-old nonspeaking, young woman from Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey. She has worked on many communication devices over the years. She began using an Epson at school four years ago, and earlier this year finally got her own Epson which she says, "has opened a whole new world for me!"

This story is going to be about my new voice. I am going to tell you what an Epson is, what my first impression of the Epson was, how long I waited for my own Epson, what I did when I got it, and how I feel to listen to myself talk. I will also tell you what I have found I can do with my Epson after having it for only four months.

An Epson is one of many communication devices. It is a small computer that you can carry around with you. It has a keyboard, a small screen, printer, tape recorder, and speaker all in one unit. I can't use my hands very well so I use a headpointer. The Epson works just by typing which I do with the headpointer. I can type my message out and read it on the screen. I can print my messages on a narrow piece of paper like a receipt you get in the store. I can also program the Epson to say phrases by hitting one, two, or three letters. The Epson has a miniature cassette so I can save the phrases on small cassettes. If the computer is down, I can load the phrases back into memory again. The Epson can also talk because it has a speaker. The voice is like a robot; you can understand it but you really have to listen to it. I have to spell some words wrong for the computer to pronounce them correctly. Hopefully, the company will solve that problem soon. The company is now trying to come up with a better voice that is easier for people to understand.

My First Contact with the Epson

I was a student at the United Cerebral Palsy (U.C.P.) school in Long

Branch, New Jersey, when Tanya Conway (she used to tutor me on the computers) and Patty Carlisimo (Transdisciplinary Coordinator) introduced me to the Epson. That was about four years ago. They tried me on the Epson and I just fell in love with it. I tried it for about a month, and after that month was up I knew that I wanted one for my own. The reason was because it had a voice, was portable, and easy to work with.

I discussed it with Tanya and Patty. They thought it was just what I needed. Patty told me, she was going to work on it, but at that time I was getting ready to go over to the Transitional class (of the school), and Patty was having a baby. To make a long story short, I went through about ten speech therapists in that time. All tried me on different communication devices and tried to convince me to think about getting one but I told them, I wanted an Epson! For three long years, as each therapist came and went, I had to start all over again. Finally Patty came back to work from maternity leave, and I wrote and told her what was going on; I was losing my patience and please help me get my own Epson. I told her, "If you are thinking about leaving you can't until I get my own Epson!" It took her six months to get everything together.



Denise Ghizzone and her Epson.

The Arrival

It happened on Monday afternoon, February 22, 1988. I found a big brown box just sitting there waiting for me when I got home from school. I asked my mom, "What is that?" She told me, "That is your Epson!" Well, I almost jumped out of my wheelchair when I heard that. I couldn't wait to tell everybody at school, but the word got out within four hours. My mom had called Patty as soon as the box had arrived. I wanted to wait till I got to school to open the box. That night I couldn't go to sleep because I was so excited.

The next day I took the Epson, still in the box, to school because I thought it had to be put together. I waited for Patty to come in. When she got in, she came right to me and opened the box. It was packed well with a bunch of little white styrofoam pieces tightly surrounding my Epson. The reason the box was so big was that the mounting kit was included. I needed a mounting kit so that my Epson could swing away from my wheelchair. The mounting kit looks like a long, curved, handle bar that hooks on to my wheelchair. Also on the bar is a little slanted plastic tray, for the Epson to sit on the edge of my tray in front of me.

Patty took the Epson out of the wrapping and saw written on it REAL VOICE. In the mail, I had received a form to fill out to get the Epson and one of the questions it asked was, "Do you want a real voice or computer voice" (or something like that). I didn't know what the question meant so I picked real voice just to see what it was all about. When Patty turned it on, it came out with this clear voice that you couldn't imagine hearing from a computer. Everybody's eyes lit up when they heard this computer say "Hello" and then we all laughed. Patty tested it out first, while I sat beside her laughing at my new voice. Then I tried it, I don't know how I did it because I was so excited. I was saying stuff to all of my friends. Keith Gerstl, Rehabilitation Technology specialist, hooked

up the mounting on my wheelchair. Once he put my Epson on my tray, and my headpointer on, that was it. I went all over the building talking to people, I went around to everybody. All of them went crazy over my voice. I had a hard time hitting the keys, because I was still too excited. It took me about two weeks to relax but once I did, it was a lot easier for me to hit the keys.

I Love to Talk

For people who don't know me, I love to talk. This was true even before I had my Epson. Before I got it, I used and still do use a hand-made alphabet board. It was a little difficult for everybody to understand me because my finger kept moving around a lot. My friends who know me well told me, I talked too much. I knew they were only joking with me. When they didn't want to listen to me, they didn't read my board. Now, they don't have to read anything anymore, they just have to listen. When I first got my Epson, they told me to come around and talk to them. So I did and talked their ears off, too. Now that I've had it four months, when my friends see me coming they say, "Oh no, here comes Denise again," and try to hide. But I always find them.

Being nonvocal is the pits, and I feel that is what is holding me back from learning some stuff. Everyday I always say to myself, if I could talk for just one day I would tell everybody off. Having my own Epson isn't the same as talking but it helps. Also it really feels good hearing my thoughts come out in a voice for once.

Now that I have had my own Epson for over four months there are a lot of different things I found out I can do with it. I am going to tell you only two important things that I enjoy doing. I read in my owner's manual that the Epson has a special memory for very long messages, so I experimented with that memory and it worked. That is great, because I only have to hit a few buttons to hear my long message. I was wondering if I could have a phone conversation, so I got in touch with my friend, Anthony. Beforehand I programmed the message into my Epson and played it back to myself to see if it

sounded correct. My friend, Eileen, helped me with dialing the number and holding the receiver. She held it over my speaker and I hit only a few buttons to say my message. When it was done, Eileen talked to Anthony to make sure he understood my message, and he did. The second thing I read in my owner's manual was that I can hook up an amplifier to my Epson. The Epson is loud but in a crowd it is drowned out in the noise. I bought an amplifier but the voice sounded muffled, and everybody had a lot of trouble understanding it. Once Keith fixes the amplifier, I really will be able to talk loud.

By reading this story you found out some things about me and my Epson. It has opened a new world for me. Now I can use the phone and also I can hear my own thoughts without people saying them for me. All my thanks go to Patty Carlisimo because without her doing that paper work to get the Epson for me, I think I would have to try some more communication devices and by doing that I might go through ten more speech therapists. □

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Prentke Romich — ISAAC Scholarships

The 1988 scholarships have been awarded to Sandra Boehmler Deanna Kempka

The Prentke Romich — ISAAC Scholarships are awarded annually to people who wish to gain expertise in the area of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

Applications for the 1988 scholarships were invited in one of four areas:

- a) professional entry level scholarship — for students in training
- b) advanced coursework scholarship — for students or practitioners in the field who wish to specialize in a particular segment of AAC
- c) travelling scholar — for persons who wish to gain insight into service delivery models and strategies (particularly if the recipient resides in a country where university coursework is unavailable)
- d) internship — for students or practising clinicians to gain the opportunity for working under the guidance of a clinician experienced in AAC.

Both recipients of the 1988 scholarships are enrolled in master's degree programs in speech-language pathology. Ms. Boehmler is enrolled at Portland State University, working in close association with Dr. Melanie Fried-Oken. Ms. Kempka is enrolled at the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater, working in close association with Dr. Mary Blake Huer.

People interested in applying for one of the 1989 scholarships should contact the ISAAC Secretariat for information packets and application forms. Deadline for 1989 applications will be in February.

Additional requests for information should be directed to:
ISAAC Secretariat
PO Box 1762, Station R
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M4G 4A3

Communicating through a Language Barrier

BETTY PITTMAN

*Betty Pittman recently took a university course in augmentative communication at Memorial University in Newfoundland. After listening to lectures for a couple of weeks and reading the first chapters of the text *Augmentative Communication: An Introduction* (Blackstone, 1986) she exclaimed one day in class, "But I've been there! I know what it's like!" and she shared with her fellow students and instructor how she had used augmentative communication methods while teaching Inuit children in the high Arctic. The following is an account she later wrote as part of an assignment.*

A few years ago, I found myself in a situation where my only communicative interaction was through augmentative means. For four years, my husband and I had the opportunity to teach in a tiny, remote Inuit village in the Northwest Territories. Broughton Island is located 300 miles north of Frobisher Bay. It had a population of 300 Inuit and fourteen white people. The only means of transportation to and from the settlement was by way of a tiny six-seater twin otter plane and the only mode of transportation around the small settlement was a snowmobile. The settlement had one truck which belong to the Hudson's Bay Company, and the people in the settlement had never seen an automobile. There was no phone, no T.V., and the only station one could pick up on the radio was Rome, Italy. So one can imagine the total isolation we both experienced. The culture and social norms were completely different from our own.

Cultural shock would probably define any initial feeling. I felt totally isolated. My language was obsolete in such an environment. I could not understand nor could I be understood. Today, when I read about cerebral palsied children

locked in their own bodies, I can empathize, as I felt totally frustrated those first few weeks. As part of our orientation to the north, we had to spend one whole week on the land with an Inuit family. I can assure you I used every means of augmentative communication available to me, and amazingly enough, I got through that first week. For many weeks thereafter I realized how much one can interact without the use of speech.

Strategies to Cross Language Barriers

My northern experience taught me many strategies to improve my communication, when speech is not available. I never did learn Inuktitut (Inuit language), but I certainly learned how to understand the Inuit and they came to understand me. When we left that tiny place, the whole settlement came to the air strip to bid us farewell.

I will try to relate in this article a few strategies I used as a classroom teacher of children who could not speak one word of English. I taught Kindergarten to 20 five-year-olds.

Establishing Rapport

I purposely list this first because if rapport is not established, there is little, if any learning going to occur.

A teacher's attitude in dealing with anyone using augmentative aids or any child for that matter is all-important. One has to be a very positive person with a warm personality and genuine interest and belief in what she is doing. One has to make friendly and active contact. For example, get down to their level, sit on the floor, smile, have fun. Your enthusiasm will rub off. Kids instinctively know if you are intolerant of their behaviour. Children are allowed to be dirty, allowed to drool. They instinctively "feel" it if you accept them.

Learn By Looking

I had to do some diagnostic looking — seeing far beyond what is there. Through their gestures, facial expressions and actions, they could tell when they hurt, felt good, were frustrated, etc. I could figure out what were their preferences, what motivated them, what did not interest them. When I could tune in to what they felt, I had a baseline and could start from there to build upon what they could do.

I used every type of visual aid available. The old saying "a picture is worth a thousand words" is a belief I hold true. The visual aids, of course, have to be geared towards what interests the child. There was no sense in my showing



Broughton Island school children.

these children six cars to teach the number six. Car was not in their repertoire. I had to show them six igloos or ookpiks (owls). The language content had to be based on what was significant in their environment.

Establish Structure and Routine

The children had to be taught what certain signs or sounds symbolized. For example, if I wanted their attention, they would respond to the ring of a bell. This was done using behaviour modification methods. They learned to recognize that soup time was at 10:30 a.m. by the sound of a few musical notes on the xylophone. Children at this early age need routine. They can become frustrated and disoriented if no routine is established.

I took nothing for granted. The language was totally different so I had to first establish a baseline and work up from there. Initially, I learned the Eskimo facial expressions for "yes" and "no"; "yes" being the raising of the eyebrows and "no" being the wrinkling up of the nose. This was all-important as it was my first break-through in communication with them. When actual concepts were being introduced, I had to keep in mind Piaget's stages of development and go from the concrete to the pictorial to the abstract. I used all formal knowledge of child development I had gathered through my professional training. Knowing children learn through their senses, I made use of many tactile and kinesthetic materials. Keeping in mind Montessori's philosophy of education, I made sand-paper letters and numerals, used many manipulatives and allowed children to experience learning speech by participation. Step-by-step task analysis of new ideas and concepts was performed. No new skill or sound was introduced until they became skilled in the one they had been working on. Sight words were used and much class participation, rather than teacher directed activities took place.

Play

The old saying "Play is child's work" is one I hold true. Children learn incidentally through play and social interaction. I often placed

brighter students who readily grasped new "English" words with slower children and one taught the other. The classroom was well equipped with many stimulating, educational toys that motivated active participation and encouraged children to use language. I took advantage of every new situation that would stimulate language participation like field trips, a class pet, the community's Hallowe'en party. A language-experience approach encouraged language participation. □

Readers may speculate how Mrs. Pittman could have made use of augmentative communication if she had done the course before she went to the Arctic. They will, I am sure, agree that she displayed the most important qualities of all — the ability to "tune-in" lovingly to the children and to skillfully provide a communication base on which they could all build and grow.

Reference

Blackstone, S. (Ed.) (1986) *Augmentative Communication: An Introduction*, Rockville, MD.: ASHA.

See What I'm Saying

In 1988, when so much attention is being given to technology and the use of various communication systems, it is delightful to come upon a videotape that explores communication through facial expression, vocalization, gesture and the "fetch" mode. Al Cook, from the Assistive Devices Center, (ADC) Sacramento, does just this in the video entitled *See What I'm Saying*. As father of Brian and director of ADC, Al shares with us the many ways in which Brian communicates within the family and with strangers, in the familiar home setting and in

a new setting, the Special Olympics.

See What I'm Saying presents a sensitive, perceptive view of the direct communication modes which can be so well used by those with cognitive impairments — if we the listeners can but learn to "see." It's a must for those working and living with children and adults who have limited cognitive abilities!

The video is available in Canada from the Easter Seal Communication Institute, 24 Ferrand Drive, Don Mills, Ontario CANADA M3C 3N2 — Price \$50.00 + shipping and handling.

From the leading edge of the nonspeech communication movement

AAC: AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION

*The Official Journal of the
International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication*

Editor: **Lyle L. Lloyd, PhD**, Professor of Special Education, Professor of Audiology and Speech Sciences, Purdue University

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AACOMM 50864 88

International Symbol News

Blissymbols for Adolescents and Young Adults

In response to requests from professionals working with Blissymbol users, the International Panel will focus upon vocabulary needs of adolescents and young adults in the coming months.

Areas to be considered include life skills, vocational training and leisure activities. BCI invites readers to submit specific vocabulary requests to the Symbol Office.

The International Symbol Panel is currently devising Blissymbols for teaching about human sexuality. Requests from the field coupled with recent media attention upon physical abuse and sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS have made this topic a priority. Increasingly, parents, teachers and therapists must address not only anatomical and physiological, but also social and emotional aspects of the "facts of life". The meaning based Blissymbols will help to explain important facts and underlying concepts to augmentative communicators.

In October, more than twenty panel members met at the ISAAC convention in Anaheim, California to share ideas. Two lively meetings

were held, with everyone expressing opinions on the possible symbol representations for the sexual terminology. As always, there was a true international flavour with delegates representing more than ten countries. There were even participants from as far away as Australia, South Africa and Brazil.

International panel meetings tend to be dominated by women, but at this meeting in California two brave men ventured into the debates. Malcolm Hind from the United Kingdom and Ami Shalit from Israel (presently living in South Africa) contributed greatly to the sensitive, often humorous, but always intense discussion of the new Blissymbols for human sexuality.

The international panel has been in existence now for eight years with many of the original panel members still active. Most members are surveyed through the mail, but opportunities such as the recent ISAAC meeting provide the ideal forum for face-to-face discussion. Panel meetings are now a reunion of old friends and welcoming of new as all bring their diverse backgrounds and dedication to the task of developing new symbols. □

Blissymbolics is a meaning-based, augmentative communication system that stimulates both communicative and cognitive development. It can be used by persons of many ages and cognitive levels, offering a large vocabulary and opportunities to apply features of the system as communication strategies. Blissymbolics can be used independently, with a variety of picture systems and technologies, as a complement to words and spelling and as a bridge to reading.

Blissymbols used herein are derived from the symbols described in the work *Semantography*, original copyright © C.K. Bliss, 1949.

September 1982, C.K. Bliss granted an exclusive, non-cancellable and perpetual, world-wide license to the Blissymbolics Communication Institute, to provide standards for the application of Blissymbols, for use by handicapped persons and persons having communication, language and learning difficulties. In 1987, the Institute was renamed Blissymbolics Communication International and became a division of the Easter Seal Communication Institute.

The symbol composition and drawings appearing in articles are in accordance with *Blissymbols for Use*, compiled and edited by Barbara Hehner, and published by the Blissymbolics Communication Institute, Toronto, 1980.

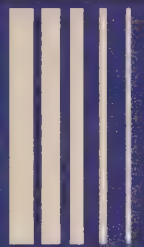


A working session of the International Panel meeting in California.

We're On the Move!

The Easter Seal Communication Institute will once again be moving to new offices. The building in which our offices are currently located has been sold for redevelopment. Effective on or about February 1, 1989, we will be moving, along with the Easter Seal Society, to new offices situated very close to our present location. Our new address will be:

**Easter Seal Communication
Institute
250 Ferrand Drive
Don Mills, Ontario
CANADA M3C 3G8
Telephone: (416) 421-8377**



Communicating in Ontario



A NEWSLETTER FOR EDUCATORS ABOUT AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION

Number 6 December 1988

We're Moving!

We are looking forward to our move in February to 250 Ferrand Drive, just a short distance from where we are presently located. Because of this move some of our regular programs have temporarily been placed on hold. That doesn't mean you can't keep in touch with us. In fact our phone number will remain the same, so give us a call if you want some information! We will keep you up to date with all the exciting changes that will be happening as a result of this move!

What's inside?

Software Review	Page 2
Many Hats	Page 2
Head Pointers	Page 3
Look in the Book	Page 4
Bulletins	Page 4

ESCI Corner

Where can I find a book like that?

Are you looking for information on Augmentative Communication, but can never put your hands on the right articles, journals or books? At ESCI we offer a unique library collection within our resource centre that has many of the most current publications. Anyone is free to come during normal business hours and browse through the resource room.

We offer a unique library collection within our Resource Centre.

We encourage people to give us a call before visiting; if there is a special topic you are interested in we can do a computer search in advance. We also conduct workshops in the resource room, so we need to avoid overlaps in schedules. A phone call ahead guarantees that you will have some time to browse through our room at your leisure.

We offer the services of a library data base giving us access to over 1400 articles. If you are seeking information on a particular subject and are having difficulties, give us a call. We'll tell you what we have to offer. We have to charge a small fee

for new searches, but we have printouts of references on many topics on hand.

In addition, we have a selection of video tapes that visitors can view while perusing our library. These tapes are also available for loan and provide a valuable way of sharing information on the topic of augmentative communication.

While visiting, professionals can see various forms of augmentative communication through our display materials. Graphic systems and sets have been incorporated into these displays to simulate the types of communication boards used by augmentative communicators.

Why not plan an appointment and come and see what our resource room has to offer you?

Communicating In Ontario

is published four times during the school year and is available to educators, augmentative communicators and their families.

Published by the Educational Service Program within the Easter Seal Communication Institute

Editor: Sherri Parkins
Graphic Editor: Jonathan Cresswell-Jones
We welcome your letters, suggestions and items. Please submit to:

Editor, Communicating in Ontario
Easter Seal Communication Institute
24 Ferrand Drive, Don Mills, Ontario
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Software Review: Symbol Writer

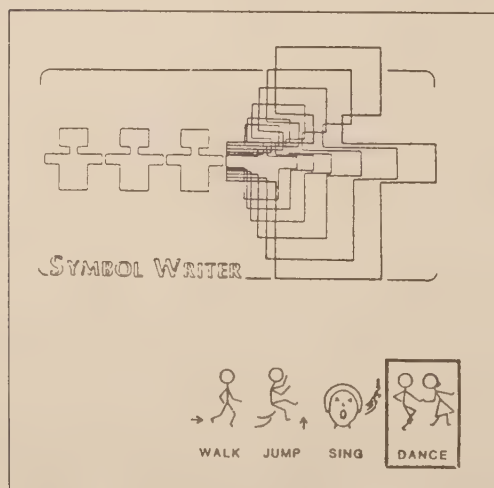
This is a "goof proof", cause and effect piece of software which allows the user to control the computer with a switch or power pad.

The program allows students to construct simple sentences from graphic representations displayed on the screen. Once the sentence is finished the computer then acts out the sentence in an animated fashion on the screen. The following vocabulary is used in the program : a, the, he, she, boy, girl, dog, robot, walks, jumps, sings, and dances. The voice output gives auditory expression to the words selected and plays common songs when acting out the verb "sings".

Symbol Writer is compatible with the Apple II+ or Apple IIe with the Echo II or II+ Speech Synthesizer.

This is a simple program that allows positive, fun interaction with the computer.

Available from:
Don Johnston Developmental
Equipment Inc.,
P.O. Box 639
1000 N. Rand Rd.,
Bldg 115
Wauconda Illinois 60084
(312) 526-2682



Did You Get A New Hat For Christmas?

Editors Note: The ideas for this article are taken from an essay submitted by Ron Appleton as part of a course in Augmentative Communication, offered by York University at the Easter Seal Communication Institute this past summer.

Did you know that, as a teacher of an augmentative communicator, you wear many hats? Think about all the hats that you wear and give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done!

- A *Representative* to the outside world, to assist the student to have many meaningful experiences.
- A *First Class Detective* who is ready to pick up on the sometimes subtle communication clues of the augmentative communicator.
- An *Interpreter* of the messages which the beginning augmentative communicator may produce.
- A *Recreational Leader* who adapts activities so that all students can participate, enjoy and benefit from being physically active.
- A *Coach* who helps the augmentative communicator develop his or her skills and strategies for successful relay of messages.

• A *Talent Agent* who finds opportunities for the augmentative communicator to use his or her newly developed skills in a whole range of classroom and community activities.

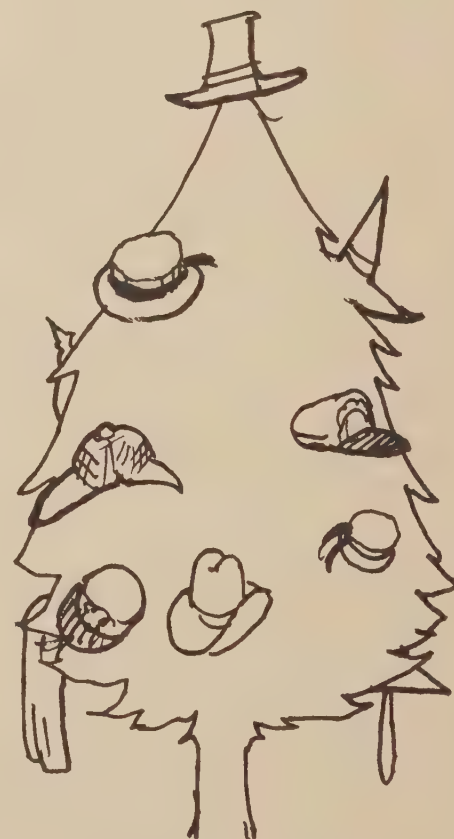
• An *Advocate* who raises awareness about augmentative communication and disabilities for other people outside the classroom door. To assist in this process the teacher needs to ensure that the student has the

necessary equipment to successfully communicate his or her message.

• A *"Behind the Scene Person"* offering support and encouragement as the student becomes more adept at communication and spends more time in integrated classes.

• A *General Manager* of the whole operation of teaching, training, and supporting the augmentative communicator in all his or her endeavors.

How does your "hat" wardrobe compare to this list? Some of us might add the jobs of nurse, cook, aide, and janitor to the above! For the new school year why not try on some new "hats" in your classroom!



Let me point this out!

What can we do if students' physical involvements prevent them from using their hands to point to things in their environment or to symbols on a display? There are commercially available light pointers that may be the answer for some of these students. With a light pointer a student can direct a beam of light towards the desired object or symbol. These pointers are usually attached to the student's head by use of head bands specifically designed for the individual student's needs. Head pointers can also be constructed fairly cheaply using commercially available flashlights and fabricating a head band to hold the light. An excellent description on how to make such a pointer is included in *Using Computers and Speech Synthesis to Facilitate Communicative Interaction with Severely Handicapped Children* by Linda Burkhart.

One of the most critical aspects of using a light pointer is the correct aiming of the beam so that the student can comfortably point to the desired item.

The diagram illustrates the correct aim of the beam of light for a light pointer.

Light pointers can be used in the following ways in the classroom environment:

- to select a word, symbol or picture during circle time for such things as the weather, date, special activity etc.
- to select activities by pointing to the desired items or areas in the classroom environment.
- to call a person to request assistance, by directing the light beam towards that individual. An alternative

method of getting attention is to adapt the light so it flashes when help is needed.

- to indicate choice of activities or reinforcements by pointing to the desired item.

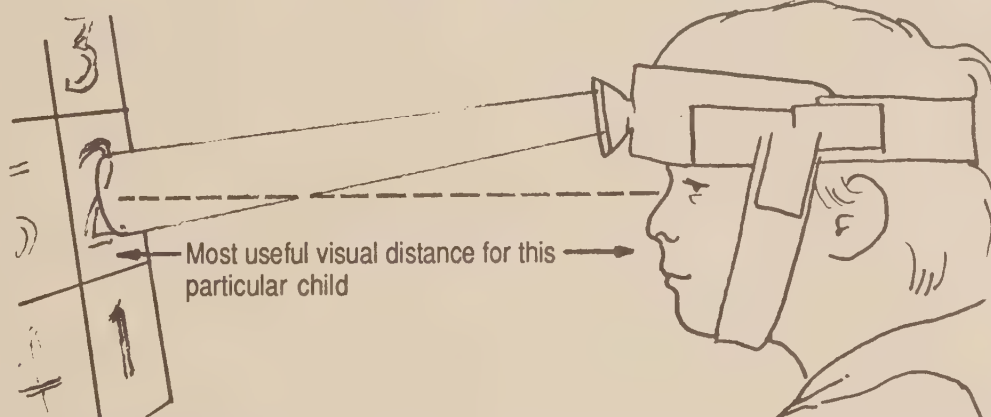
Light pointers can be a positive step in the development of a communication system. The co-operation of all profes-

sionals involved with the student is, however, an important factor for successful use. Once the light pointer has become an effective method of communicating, attention may be shifted toward teaching students to refine their control and to use the light pointer to indicate symbols on their core or theme displays.

Using the Light Pointer

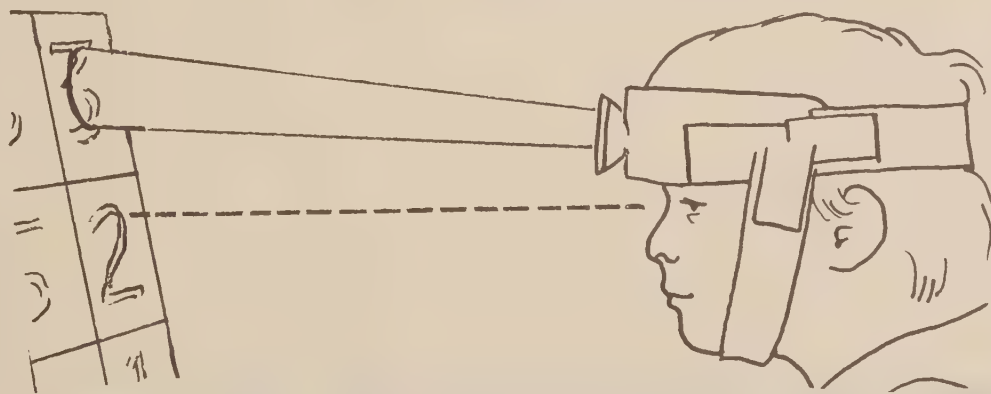
Correct Adjustment

The beam should point naturally to where the child's eye gaze is resting.



Incorrect Adjustment

If the beam is misaligned, it will not follow the child's eye gaze, and will point to the wrong location.



Reference: *Using Computers and Speech Synthesis to Facilitate Communicative Interaction with Severely Handicapped Children*

Linda J. Burkhart

8503 Rhode Island Avenue

College Park, MD 20740



Ontario Chapter of the American Association on Mental Retardation Annual Conference

March 8-10, 1989

Royal York Hotel, Toronto, Ontario

For more information contact:

Dr. Maurice Feldman

Surrey Place Centre

2 Surrey Place

Toronto, Ontario

M5S 2C2 • Telephone (416) 925-5141

Technical Aids '89 Conference

February 24, 1989.

Durham College

Oshawa, Ontario

For more information contact:

Janice Rowe

Technical Aids '89

609 William Street

Cobourg, Ontario

K9A 3A6 • Telephone (416) 372-5491

Vocational Assessment and Intervention Strategies for the Physically Disabled Adolescent and Young Adult

January 23, 1989.

Direct your inquiries to:

Anne Brackstone

Assistant Education Co-ordinator

The Rehabilitation Centre

505 Smyth Road

Ottawa, Ontario

K1H 8M2 • Telephone (613) 737-7350 ext 602

Toy Lending Library for Handicapped Children
Sunbeam Residential Developmental Centre

2749 Kingsway Drive

Kitchener, Ontario

N2L 1A8 • Telephone (519) 893-6200

This seems like an excellent idea! Perhaps more communities could offer this service. See the address of the Canadian Toy Libraries for more information on this type of undertaking.

Look in the Book !

What can I do to use all the toys my students received for Christmas ?

The following is a list of excellent books that offer suggestions on adapting toys, games and activities for use by physically disabled children. With a bit more thought on our part, we can further adapt these suggestions so that our nonspeaking students can participate fully in the many new and exciting games and toys this past holiday season brought!

From Toys To Computers: Access for the Physically Disabled Child

Christine Wright

Distributed By:

Don Johnston Developmental Equipment Inc.,

P.O. Box 639

1000 N. Rand Rd.,

Bldg 115

Wauconda, Illinois, 60084

Toys Help - A Guide for Choosing Toys for Handicapped Children

Canadian Association of Toy Libraries and Parent
Resource Centres - TL RC Canada

301 Montrose Ave.,

Room 206

Toronto, Ontario

M6G 3G9

Activities Using Headsticks and Optical Pointers: A Description of Methods

Britt-Marie Eriksson et. al.

Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled

One Yonge Street

Suite 2110

Toronto, Ontario

M5E 1K5

Telephone (416) 862-0340

**Perhaps you can post this page on your staff
bulletin board for everyone's benefit!**

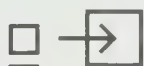
New Symbols Added to the 1988 Vocabulary

The Symbol Office has recently published a list of new and revised symbols which were approved by the Symbol Committee in 1988. We have included a sampling of the new symbols here. A booklet with the complete listing of new symbols is available from BCI at \$5.00 per copy including postage and handling. To obtain a copy, write to Blissymbolics Communication International, 250 Ferrand Drive, Don Mills, Ontario CANADA M3C 3G8.

Symbols for Activities of Daily Living

Personal Hygiene

absorbent material, sponge



material + into

diaper



absorbent material + combination of buttocks and genitals

tampon, sanitary napkin, sanitary towel (U.K.)



absorbent material + woman

dental floss



linear thing + teeth

toilet paper



paper + toilet

day care centre



building + daycare

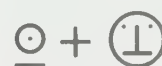
drinking straw



linear thing + drink

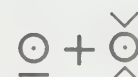
Makeup and Grooming

makeup



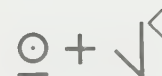
colour + plus + face; colour added to face

eye makeup



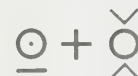
colour + plus + pointers to eyelids & lashes: colour added to eyelids & eyelashes

nail polish



colour + plus + finger: colour added to fingernails

lipstick



colour + plus + lips: colour added to lips

deodorant



chemical product + against + smell

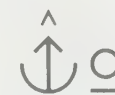
sun screen/ lotion



chemical product + against + sun

Other Symbols

to feed



to give + food

ironing board



table + iron

CATHY FAIRLEY

The Paraphrase is written for those who are moving into traditional orthography. It offers an independent reading opportunity for the growing reader. The Paraphrase is written by Cathy Fairley, former consultant, Easter Seal Communication Institute. In this issue she has paraphrased an article by Bryan Lamont which appeared in the last issue of Communicating Together Volume 6, Number 3, September, 1988.

Finding the Right Class

My name is Bryan Lamont. I am twenty-five years old. I have cerebral palsy.

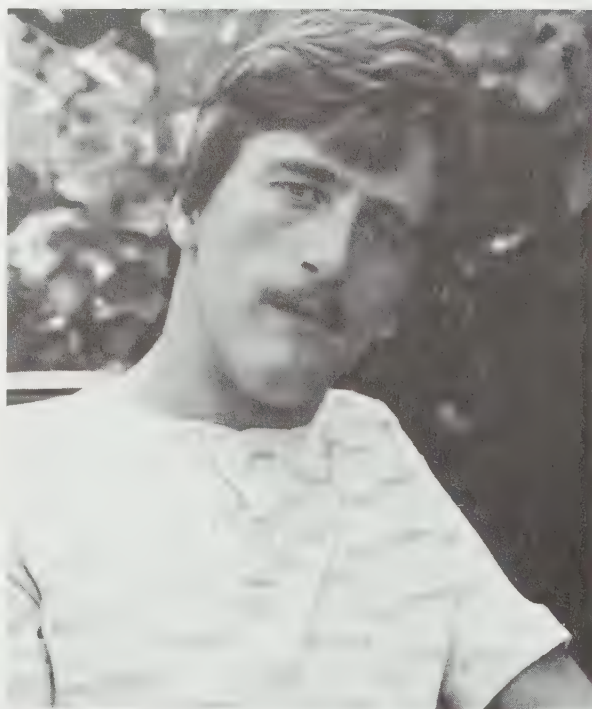
I went to school for twelve years. I was in a class for slow learners. I found it boring. I know I could have learned more. But they didn't know that.

My mother wanted me to be in a regular school. But she didn't have a choice then.

Now I go to a high school. I have learned a lot. But it is hard. I wish I had always gone to a regular school. Then it would be easier for me now.

To Readers of Paraphrase

Bryan Lamont would be glad to hear from you. Please write him at: 539-10th Avenue, Hanover, Ontario, Canada N4N 1R3. □



Bryan Lamont

Learning Symbols: YES, Communicating: NO

SOPHIA KALMAN



Sophia Kalman is a medical doctor in Budapest, Hungary. She has been a pioneer in her country in the field of augmentative communication. She sent us her reflections on the problems which remain despite her efforts in the past four years to set up an augmentative communication service in Hungary. Some may be unique to Hungary, but we suspect that many readers will recognize the situations she describes, whatever country they are working in and whatever type of augmentative communication service they are trying to establish. We hope readers will accept Dr. Kalman's invitation to comment on her article, either to offer advice or to share similar stories from their own experience.

At the Blissymbolics Communication International affiliate meeting in Milan earlier this year, it felt good to show and share our country's achievements and results. It also felt good that we had something to offer and that this time we weren't just asking for help, but were able to give as well. And while enjoying the successes, we failed to mention the troubles. It is true that we have appropriate teaching material for instructors, and for users as well. We have developed an elementary training

course with fairly high standards. We have founded the Hungarian Bliss Foundation which is working effectively and smoothly (struggling with fundraising all the time), and we do a lot for spreading knowledge, reaching out for those in need of augmentative communication. We have enormous plans for the future, namely to build and organize the first augmentative communication centre in Eastern Europe (remember the above-mentioned problems with fundraising...). It's all glamorous, but there are problems hiding behind the glamour.

We still don't know exactly how many people need help in augmentative communication in our country. It's almost impossible to figure out where they live, how they live, how they function, and what kind of education they get. When we have tried by sending out questionnaires, those responsible for the answers made a pre-selection. We asked for information about people who couldn't speak, but seemed to be in good contact with their surroundings, alert and eager to communicate. In many cases the reply was something like this: "We don't give the names of the people in question because they cannot speak, thus we are sure that you won't be able to do anything with them."

It seems that the underlying prejudices are too deep. This thought is reinforced by the findings of our interviews with parents of nonverbal Blissymbol users. They firmly state that people in general, and their own child as well, are able to get used to the fact that they will need to use a wheelchair for life, but it is the inability to communicate which makes them really suffer. The world considers them as non-humans. Whenever we offer help to nonverbal people living in residential institutions, the caretakers' and therapists' answers are almost always the same: they cannot be helped, because they are nonverbal. Funny logic...

Resistance to New Ideas

It is also interesting (and upsetting) that even though there were almost

three hundred teachers, nurses, therapists, and parents trained in Blissymbolics during the last four years, only forty-five students were taught Blissymbolics during the last school year. And we have information that many of them have stopped learning the system for various reasons: the child left the institution or school, the teacher left, etc.

In other cases the director or principal of a school or residential institution disapproves of augmentative communication (without having sufficient knowledge about its ways and means), and doesn't provide the necessary time, place and opportunities for the teacher. At a special school in Budapest, we had trained three special teachers. They were working with three students very effectively: one of them started to read and write after communicating with symbols for three years; the other developed new sounds in her speech, and appropriate school subjects could be taught to the third child with the help of the symbols. In the past year the principal of this school simply said "no" for the whole symbol program, and prohibited the work with the children. She felt it was against the children's own interests.

The trainees are very enthusiastic when they complete the training course and go back home with a load of beautiful books, coloured flashcards, communication boards and worksheets. But this enthusiasm certainly fails when confronted with a suspicious, uncooperative and sometimes even hostile environment.

We try to keep in touch with every teacher and parent who ever attended a training course. We try to follow up their students/children, and provide consultations in their own surroundings.

The results are sad. It is true that the teachers who are lucky enough to have a cooperative principal, department head or director are

**This section of
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working well with their students. They prepare interesting teaching material for demonstration with good intentions and creativity. Their symbol teaching itself, the explanations, demonstrations and symbol games are very effective. In some cases even low functioning students are learning them well, and are able to match and to choose adequately.

But when it comes to the practice of communication, everything falls apart. No 'high technology' is available in Hungary. Thus, if a student has serious difficulty with pointing, he or she usually loses interest in the symbols very soon.

The communication boards are often impractical, heavy and big. It is difficult, slow and tiring to turn the pages. In our society, especially nowadays, people are often tired and intolerant. They are deeply involved in their own troubles. They are not easily willing to give their time, patience and attention to severely handicapped people. If they meet a slow pointing child with her communication board, perhaps in a grocery store, they are apt to say 'close your book, go home, and tell your mother to write down clearly what she wants you to buy.'

The primary caretakers, nurses, grandmothers (mothers usually work out of the house in Hungary) who are working with nonverbal people do not like the communication boards. It is not clear why they would rather choose the frustrating guessing game than the more accurate symbol communication. The grandmothers usually state that they are too old for such fancy new stuff. The caretakers and nurses emphasize that they do not have time for this kind of attention. The childcare workers and therapists are convinced that they do not need it, they understand everything that is worth understanding. And the teachers and speech therapists oppose it, because they fear that the user will not want to speak if the pointing brings results.

A further problem is the wide gap which exists between the symbol lessons and everyday living. Lessons are fun, the symbols are loved, the Blissymbol teacher is always a special person for the potential user. But when the lesson is over, the boards, cards, symbol games and other fun things are

placed carefully in a drawer until the next lesson. Even if the child carries the board back to his class, or takes it home, in 99% of cases he will not have an opportunity to use it until the next meeting with the symbol teacher.

Searching for Good Assessment Tools

Another issue is the question of assessment. We are working with a modified version of the MacDonald questionnaire published in *Teaching and Using Blissymbolics*, and we like to use the Pre-Bliss program of Margareta Jennische from Uppsala, Sweden. We emphasize the importance of diagnostic teaching, observation, and preparative steps. But at the moment we more often use our 'gut feelings' than some objective method to decide whether or not it is worth starting a symbol program with a particular student.

We plan to take study trips to already existing augmentative communication centres to learn about the diagnostic steps, errors, and the process of assessment itself.

Since we still do not have a centre where these and similar problems can be studied for the desired length of time, practising teachers feel indecisive and lonely when they have to make an assessment by themselves. A speech therapist after attending a Blissymbol elementary training course, goes back to the countryside, absolutely deprived of any professional help in augmentative communication. There is no teamwork, she has to decide about everything: whom to choose, how to choose, how to start, etc. I wish we could at least offer her a sound way for selecting appropriate candidates.

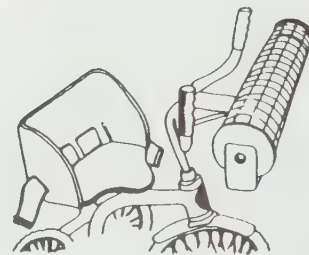
One could continue the long line of troubles, but my aim was not the complaining itself. I just wanted to share not only my bright, but my darker experiences as well. I hope there are other colleagues with similar findings, who will be able to give me advice and hope. □

Editor's Note:

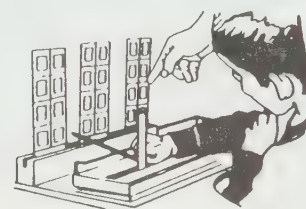
Readers who wish to offer Dr. Kalman comments or suggestions may do so by writing to her c/o *Communicating Together*, 24 Ferrand Drive, Don Mills, Ontario CANADA M3C 3N2.

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An Interview with Faith Carlson

ANN KENNEDY

Faith Carlson is a speech pathologist at the Rehabilitation Institute of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania. She is best known to those in the field of augmentative and alternative communication as the developer of the graphic system PICSYMS. The following interview with Ms. Carlson took place at the recent ISAAC convention in Anaheim, California.



Faith Carlson

Communicating Together:

Let's begin by learning a little of your background and how you started in the field of augmentative and alternative communication.

Ms. Carlson:

I guess I would say that I got into the field by accident. Initially I studied philosophy at university, but I came to realize there weren't too many jobs available for philosophers.

My father was a physician and the family had always been service oriented. When I was struggling to find just what I did want to do, he arranged for me to talk with his friend Dr. Hilmer Michaelbust, head of the Speech Pathology Department at Northwestern University. At that point neither my father nor I knew much about the field, but Dr. Michaelbust sparked my interest and I decided to try it out. I studied at University of Wichita (now Wichita State) and at Central Michigan. Since then I have worked in a variety of clinical settings as well as in public schools. Over the past twenty years I have worked with a wide range of clients from young children up to adults.

Communicating Together:

We have known you for many years as the developer of PICSYMS. How did they come about?

Ms. Carlson:

When I first started working in the mid 1960's, I started drawing pictures because there weren't materials

available. I didn't really start with the PICSYMS then, but a lot of what eventually came from this period influenced my thinking in developing PICSYMS. I always drew things in a standardized format — for years, I drew them the same each time for therapy materials with the young or low functioning children with whom I was working.

In the early 1970's, I began doing some formalizing of the drawings. Everyone in the department was wanting me to draw symbols and it became too much. I found people were xeroxing off the ones I had done, so it made me realize there was a need for a formalized system. With young children, vocabulary needs to be instantly available when a child is ready for it, and most often it's the parents who are involved at this moment. Most parents told me they "couldn't draw a thing". What I did was systematically to teach them how to draw. This is so important as you need to be able to react spontaneously to a situation and PICSYMS allows you to do this.

Communicating Together:

The field of augmentative communication has grown since those days in the early 1970's. Where do you see it now?

Ms. Carlson:

We are still at a very disorganized stage from the standpoint of taking an augmentative communicator from birth to grave. We haven't begun to go through a first genera-

tion yet, and service delivery is still a patchwork kind of thing. My hope is that as enough pieces of good research are available we can look at a client's whole life and have a sequential approach to meet his or her needs.

There is a tremendous deficit of materials. Notwithstanding that there are lots of materials available, they don't seem to be there the moment I need them for this particular three-year-old or five or seven-year-old. You constantly have to adapt. The ones who are getting the good shake are those who have someone spending hours and hours to see that it happens. We cannot afford to let this continue. What we need to do is pull it all together in a much better developmental order or continuum. To some extent this has happened in select cases where there has been very good parent/teacher/ augmentative communication specialist coordination.

Communicating Together:

Where do you see electronics taking us in augmentative communication?

Ms. Carlson:

The electronics only go so far at present. I think our next step is the point at which we take the memory load out of electronics for the young or more severely handicapped individual — where you don't have to remember codes, where you don't have to remember sequences, where there are some automatic reminders.

My dream device for young children would be one where symbols or pictures or a series of pictures come up on a screen, which could be activated, if skills allowed, by direct access by pointing or touching the appropriate one. This would lead to another whole set of related symbols coming up from which he or she can choose what is wanted. This would eliminate the child having to remember three or four steps to get to the choice.

I have found that it is very difficult for young children to handle scanning. They have to be thinking about that process at the same time as they are concentrating on their

message. My dream device would eliminate needing to remember the method as well as the message.

Communicating Together:

How do you go about training them for this sort of technology?

Ms. Carlson:

One of the best things you can do is visit your local toy store, and look for existing things that have "components" of getting ready. For example, there is a neat toy called "My Talking Computer" made by Coleco. There is one level of this toy that works exactly like a communication device. For a minimum amount of money, I can give this to a young child to play with and experiment with beginning vocabulary. All I have to do is replace the printed words, which come with it, with symbols or pictures. Another example is something like a loop-tape recorder. All the time a child is experimenting with the likes of these toys, he or she is getting the idea of communicating via electronics.

I think the most important thing to get across to children at this early level is that they are interacting *with* electronics. Too often we make the mistake of spending time teaching strategies of *how to use* the electronics. But what they need to understand is that this is a tool for interaction. Otherwise it becomes a tool that is nothing but an environmental interaction like turning on a light.

If a child hits a button that makes a sound, that has to mean something, and be interpreted in that way by the partner who comes back immediately with communication, ideally with the same kind of device, because often these children have difficulty learning the concept of communication if they are the only ones using that device as output.

Interestingly, the very young children who get devices seem to identify with the voice. I work with one little girl now who won't let us change the voice on her device, even though it's the old gravelly computer device. She's not as skilled at using the device as other kids her age, but she's in control of her communication and has been from the day she started with the device. From the beginning I didn't put anything on it before she indicated she wanted it and so interaction situations began immediately.

Communicating Together:

What technology are you using for speech synthesis?

Ms. Carlson:

Anything and everything that works.

One of the nice things we do now, is give the clients, particularly the older ones, a choice of devices. There may be three systems that are similar and I can show them the features of all, and let them choose which they would like, including sometimes the choice not to get technology.

I have a five-year-old I've been working with for two years and I have introduced her to all ranges of systems. She can now use a headstick, or light-beam etc., none of them well, but she can use them. When we sit down to work, it is her choice which to work with. It's interesting that over a period of several weeks she has rotated through them all. I have no idea what she'll end up with, but in the meantime she's developing all those skills. We must do this with all children. We can't just develop one thing. As they grow older many of the children, particularly those with cerebral palsy, lose some of their physical abilities. The client to whom this happens will be much better off in finding alternatives if many different skills have been developed along the way.

Another argument for developing a range of skills is for protection in the event equipment breaks down or is no longer available. A backup is so important. I have a client who is in her mid-fifties who has had to learn a whole new set of strategies and procedures because her device is no longer available. This has been difficult not only for the woman herself but for her eighty-year-old mother who has been coping with learning a new system as well. We must start at the beginning with a variety of possible options to avoid being trapped at a later stage.

Communicating Together:

What are your thoughts on the assessment process to make all of this possible.

Ms. Carlson:

I believe that, every moment you are working with an individual, you are constantly assessing. In doing

that, once you have some systems in play and you see that the person is going in another direction, you can instantaneously make changes. For example, if a child doesn't really understand action words, I don't worry about that — until the moment I get a glint that they are beginning to grasp this concept. Then I immediately start to add action words and integrate them into the situation.

None of the training I do with an individual has any real value unless I have another communication partner with me; a parent, teacher, or attendant. I work with them and train them to see how and when they can jump in. I outline the next possible steps that may be coming up, what clues to watch for, and what to do when they find them. It isn't good enough to wait for the next appointment. My job is to make the parents independent. In fact this was one of the important reasons behind PICSYMS. I had to show parents how to draw symbols so that they had instant access to vocabulary and could react to a situation spontaneously. You need to think of PICSYMS as writing, not drawing. And this is what technology can't give you quite as quickly — not yet.

Communicating Together:

How is technology going to give this spontaneity in the future.

Ms. Carlson:

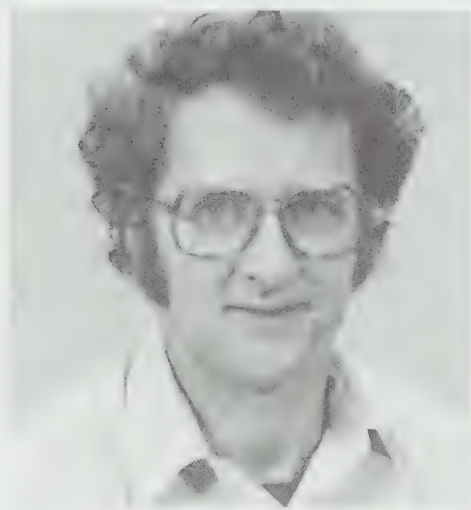
I think eventually we will have smart systems that will be able to generate symbols. Just look at what is being done in computer graphics for such fields as architectural design, where you can draw a simple plan for a house and get a three dimensional picture on the screen. With that possible now, it is reasonable to expect that someday you can feed in a minimal amount of information, have it acted upon by an expert or smart system and come up with a well drawn symbol. Even quite young users will be able to create their own symbols. It's still a long way off, but it's coming. □

Reference:

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A New Emphasis and an Old Problem

GEB VERBURG



"Research and Publications" is written by Geb Verburg, who has been involved in the field of nonspeech communication since the mid-seventies. A cognitive scientist, Mr. Verburg is currently working as a research associate in several projects at the Hugh MacMillan Medical Centre, Toronto.

This column draws together a number of points made by Dr. David Beukelman during a day-long workshop on Augmentative and Alternative Communication held at the Hugh MacMillan Medical Centre. The workshop was made possible through funds from the 1987 Prencke Romich Award, received by Janice Light, Penny Parnes, and Barbara Collier. Within the space of this column I cannot adequately review the workshop. Instead, I recommend that you invite Dr. Beukelman for a day, and hope you will enjoy his presentation as much as I did. By way of a summary, the following topics were covered. The morning was dedicated to augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) applications for the academically competitive student — two important strategies showed how a student can be helped to "stay in the curriculum", and how, once a client has fallen out, one can help to play catch-up. In the afternoon the lecture focused on augmentative communication with

adults; in intensive and acute care settings and in acquired injuries such as stroke and brain injury. The session was a pleasant mixture of lecture with slides, and case presentation with video footage.

The split in childhood AAC methods and those used in adult AAC gave me a starting point for this article. In comparing the methods used with the two groups, I found one very positive similarity in a new approach taken to both the child and adult clients. This new emphasis consists of a change from a "needs and wants" focus to a "participation" focus. In the next section I will place this new emphasis in a developmental continuum and link it to a classic, and I think still very valid hierarchy. I also found some intriguing and worrisome dissimilarities between AAC concepts in children and adults. The first has to do with the use of the concept of "world knowledge", which was mentioned most frequently in the context of childhood AAC and the concept of "social closeness" which (in my notes) emerged only in the discussion of adult augmentative communicators. My immediate question was "Can children do without social closeness?" And my answer: "Of course not!" The second difference occurred around the concept of control. In discussing adults in Intensive Care Units (ICU's) Dr. Beukelman stated — almost casually — that "They (the clients) want to stay just as independent as they are in the rest of their life." Being in control and becoming independent are two enormously important tasks in childhood also. The third difference between concepts as applied to adults and children was of great concern to me as a developmental child psychologist. In order to streamline intervention in the ICU, a "cognitive screening test" was developed. This test contained eight "yes, no" questions and was a perfect predictor of success in AAC. Intervention failed when a person had a score of less than six (out of eight).

The global message here is: cognition is an important determinant of

communication success. But if one looks more closely at the cognitive screening test, it is not really a test of cognition. The test measures: attention, motivation, and compliance (i.e. following instructions). These skills are only indirectly related to cognition but they are directly related to academic success and to learning in general. My concern is that this test, designed specifically for use in an ICU where speaking clients have temporarily lost their ability to speak, will be inappropriately applied to preverbal children. If such happened, the test could become a means to exclude children who need all the help they can get to learn to attend, to become motivated and to learn how to follow instructions.

The three differences — social closeness and world knowledge, control and independence, and basic learning or if you wish cognitive skills — are closely related and lie at the heart of what, at least for me, has been and still is one of the oldest and toughest problems of AAC intervention. I will come back to that in the last section of this column.

The New Emphasis and Beyond

The progression from a needs based model of intervention (Beukelman, Yorkston, & Dowden, 1985) to a participation model (Rosenburg & Beukelman, 1988) which applies both to child and adult clients is a significant development and a very gratifying sign of maturation of the field. My assessment of the reason for the shift is not just that the needs framework does not suffice anymore, but rather that clinicians are more or less routinely able to meet the wants and needs of clients and are now capable of looking beyond these rather elementary uses of communication to higher and deeper needs that communication must meet. Participation in the family, school, peer group or work place is one such higher need and social closeness is another. That these two higher needs emerged at about the same time is not just a coincidence as you will see presently.

But let me first give my version of the continuum of development of the AAC field. AAC really started with the creation of special communication systems, their evaluation and the agonizing about selecting one or another system, with much attention given to vocabulary selection and access; the shift to interaction and conversation strategies represented a higher level of focus and the attention to underlying cognitive and/or perceptual processes is again a more advanced focus. However, the new emphasis on participation and social closeness lifts the focus from communication process (or form) to the level of communication function. That is what makes this change so important for the development of the field and even more so for the clients served. This shift in focus does not mean that all previous foci are fully exhausted or surpassed, far from it: there remain many unresolved or uninvestigated issues all the way down to the system level. The new emphasis shows that clinicians have the tools to meet the basics and can now address the next level of need in a classical hierarchy of basic human needs i.e. Maslow's Hierarchy.

Maslow's famous study of peak experiences (Maslow, 1964, 1968, 1974) resulted in a hierarchy of human needs which consists of the following levels:

- physiological,
- safety,
- love and belonging,
- self esteem, and
- self actualization.

These needs are ordered from low (basic physiological needs and wants e.g. air, food, drink, comfort) to successively higher levels of need, with self actualization being the highest need for a human being. According to Maslow all people have these needs and the lower or more basic needs (those at the top of the list) must be met before higher needs can be successfully addressed and met. Now if you think back to the two concepts that characterize the new emphasis i.e. participation and social closeness it is not difficult to fit these concepts into Maslow's hierarchy.

I find it a tremendous accomplishment that AAC has transcended the basic levels of physiological, security, and comfort needs, and that clinicians and theorists feel capable

of tackling the broad and important needs are of love and belonging. I realize that symbols for terms of endearment and togetherness have existed in almost all current (graphic) systems. The new focus on participation or belonging, and social closeness or love, does not necessarily mean that we must start putting more heart symbols on the symbol boards. The more important message is that communication is not just about making wants and needs known and about ensuring comfort and safety. Communication is part of the experience of participation, group membership, belonging, loving.

Maslow's hierarchy may help us to anticipate the further needs that augmentative and alternative communication will be asked to meet. As long as we keep in mind that the basic wants and needs must be met in order for higher needs to become relevant for the client, then I think that Maslow's hierarchy can be a very useful guide to intervention.

An Old Problem and...

The old problem of AAC lies in the close relationship between language and cognition, where cognition means knowledge of the world, knowledge of others, of things, of relations, of actions. Dr. Beukelman emphasised how important it is for the client to have a good base of world knowledge (and the appropriate vocabulary) in order to communicate successfully. I totally agree with that, but it is equally true that language or some representational system is essential for the acquisition, storage, manipulation, and generation of knowledge. And so, a nonspeaking infant is caught in a bind like no other. To acquire knowledge most effectively the child needs language and to learn to communicate most effectively he/she needs knowledge of the world.

A speaking child is able to handle this dilemma by having virtually unlimited access to all the words in the world. As his or her knowledge develops the child can literally snatch words out of the air and use them to codify bits and pieces of the evolving knowledge structure. It matters little if the words are not quite appropriate, practice and trial-use will refine the meanings and reorganize the cognitive structure at

the same time. In earlier columns I have discussed how preciously small those windows of time are that a child is ready for just this word and no other, and how quickly a word is forgotten when it is not used and integrated in the knowledge and conceptual structure that is the child's at the particular time. In speaking children the small window size (due to attention, auditory analysis, and short term memory limitations) is not really detrimental because other windows will open up and the word in question or a close kin will be acquired soon enough. The key to the success of this admittedly personal account of the mixture of language and knowledge acquisition in the speaking child is the child's ability to do something with those new words/concepts: use them, try them out, practise saying them, and observe the reactions to their use and thus test their appropriateness in her/his cognitive structure, and at the same time test the veracity of the cognitive structure itself.

A nonspeaking child cannot do very much with the new words that are also all around him or her. And so the rate of acquisition of new words is slowed immensely. The very inability to grab words and turn them into usable, stable, repeatable, known elements of a language and knowledge structure means that nonspeaking children have very little control over the representation of their cognitive structures and little means to accelerate their growth through the manipulation and integration of new words/concepts.

That is my oldest problem with AAC; as you can see it has to do with cognition, world knowledge and control, that is control over the words or symbols that are available when cognitive windows open up in the course of a day's experience. I do not have the solution. But the statement of the problem may count for something.

Part of the solution may lie in the requirement that a communication system be able to help a child to develop cognitively, as is an explicit aim of the Blissymbolics system. Another part of the solution may come from a different interpretation of social closeness in childhood. Earlier I assigned social closeness to the need for love and belonging in

Maslow's hierarchy. In children, social closeness is not so much concerned with love but very much more with belonging. A child in quest of independence needs to belong to a peer group, needs to be involved, needs to be close with people who share his word view and her world knowledge. In fact, world knowledge becomes, in many ways, the currency of group membership in childhood. Children talk about, and are esteemed for the clothes they wear, the movies they have seen, the vacations they have enjoyed, the problems they have encountered, and those they are able to solve. These experiences are both the nutrients to cognitive and linguistic growth and the fare of participation and belonging. In children, world knowledge and social closeness are very closely related. Therefore part of the solution to the oldest AAC problem is to give the nonspeaking child as many of these experiences as their speaking peers enjoy. A twelve year old nonspeaking child can watch the movies or videos that other twelve or eleven or ten year olds watch, or can sport a hairdo that just hit town.

That does not solve the problem of not being able to snatch words out of thin air, an ability that is crucial from age two or so onward, but I believe that there are now ways of implementing limited forms

in which this can be accomplished using fairly high technology.□

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

ESCI Special Interest Seminars

In Toronto

The Easter Seal Communication Institute (ESCI) holds a series of one-day seminars throughout the year on a variety of topics related to the application of augmentative communication.

Because of the relocation to new offices, no day seminars have been planned for the first part of 1989. Seminars planned for the Spring include:

- Selecting Graphics for Communication Boards, May 24-25.
- Programming for an Augmentative Communicator in the Class, May 26.

Six-Week Courses

- Basic Sign Language for Use with Augmentative Communicators — for people who want to develop their skills in Signing Exact English. The session will use a "hands active" approach and focus on teaching some necessary basic skills for establishing a total communication environment. This is a beginner course appropriate for those already working with augmentative communicators using sign language or who anticipate doing so and who wish to become more proficient in basic signing. Six Monday evenings starting Monday, April 3rd.
- Intermediate Sign Language for Use with Augmentative Communicators — for those wishing to expand their basic sign language vocabulary for use in a total communication environment. Participants are expected to have completed an elementary signing course (such as that offered at ESCI in the fall of 1988) or have some experience working with a beginning signing vocabulary. Six Monday evenings starting Monday, February 13th.

Contact: Training Coordinator, Easter Seal Communication Institute, 24 Ferrand Drive, Don Mills, Ontario M3C 3N2.
Telephone: (416) 421-8377.

Oregon Society for Augmentative Communication

In Portland, Oregon

- February 3-4, 1989

Guest Speakers: Pat Mirenda and Sheela Stuart.

Contact: Julie Howard, 20343 SW Blaine, Aloha, Oregon 97006 USA.
Telephone: (503) 642-2340.

The Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists

In Toronto, Ontario

- May 10-13, 1989

Hilton International Hotel
Contact: CASLA, Suite 311,
44 Eglinton Avenue West, Toronto,
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4th Canadian Congress of Rehabilitation

In Toronto, Ontario

- June 21-23, 1989

"Workers and Workplaces:
Challenges and Innovations"

Contact: Secretariat, CRCO,
One Yonge Street, Suite 2110,
Toronto, Ontario M5E 1E5.
Telephone: (416) 862-0340.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Summer, 1989 Institute

Introduction to Augmentative and Alternative Communication In Lincoln, Nebraska

- June 19-30, 1989

Presented by David Beukelman, Ph.D., Pat Mirenda, Ph.D., and staff.
Contact: Nancy Brown, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 202 Barkley Memorial Center, Lincoln, NE 68583-0732 USA.
Telephone: (402) 472-3955.

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The Easter Seal Communication Institute, ESCI, formerly the Blissymbolics Communication Institute, established in 1975, has worked since its inception toward enhancing the lives of nonspeaking people. In its early years the Institute's primary focus was the development and application of Blissymbolics as an augmentative communication system around the world. This role continues through Blissymbolics Communication International, a division of ESCI, but within a broader mandate that reflects the philosophy and perspective of its professional staff.

ESCI supports effective communication by nonspeaking people through:

- (1) Contributing to the field of augmentative and alternative communication in a manner that promotes cognitive, social and emotional growth.
- (2) Implementing services to improve the quality of instruction for augmentative communicators toward the development of cognitive, social and emotional growth.
- (3) Educating, informing and increasing the awareness of those who are in a position to make positive life changes for nonspeaking people.
- (4) Incorporating Blissymbolics Communication International within ESCI, to maintain support for the system of Blissymbolics, considering it to be a valuable means to advance augmentative communication that contributes to development and growth.
- (5) Making augmentative communication materials and publications readily available to those who require them.

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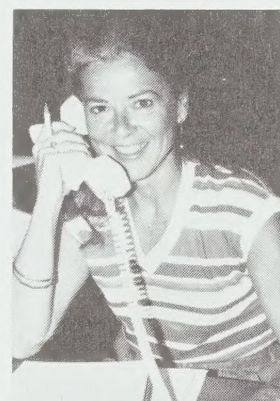
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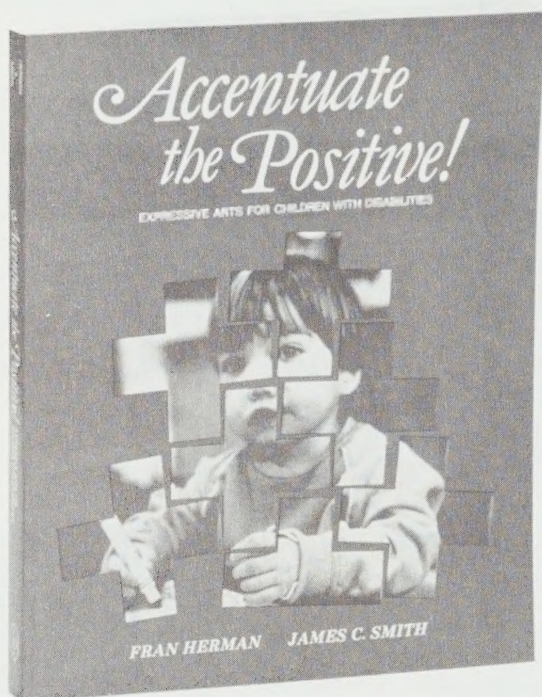
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